

The Political Pluriverse

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In this selection from IMPERIUM, one of the greatest minds of the age writes on democracy.

THE WORLD OF POLITICS is a pluriverse. Although politics has been defined as activity in relation to power, and the inner nature, prerequisites, and invariable characteristic of politics have been set forth, nevertheless the nature of power itself remains to be shown. *Power is a relation of control between two similar organisms.* The degree of control is determined by the nature of the two organisms acting reciprocally on one another. Power appears, in its dim beginnings, in the animal world, where the beasts of prey exert something similar to power over their prospective victims. As something more than transitory, something constituted, however, it begins with man.

Animals can be classified spiritually—and there is no point in any other classification, such as the materialistic Linnean one—into two great groups, herbivores and beasts of prey. If the materialistic thinkers had ever looked at it so, they would surely have put man down as a beast of prey. And they would have been correct for the animal part of him. This animal part is in constant tension with the spiritual part, the specifically human soul which sees symbolism in things and gives the symbol primacy over the mere phenomenon. For this is in very truth the deepest depth of all philosophizing whatever. Where does the question of a conflict between “appearance” and “reality” ever come from in the first place? All great philosophy in High Cultures,

and there is none without High Cultures, has been saturated with the idea of establishing the true relationship between appearance and reality, and this was in obedience to an instinct which embodies the *essence* of man: his human soul tells him that *Alles Vergangliche ist nur ein Gleichnis*.

The will-to-power of the beasts of prey is limited and practical; it is fierce but unspiritual. Man carries within him this same will-to-power, but his soul infuses into it a purely spiritual intensity that raises its demands and its performances incomparably above the level of the beast. To the beast his will-to-power comes into play only in killing. Man, however, seeks not to kill, but to control. To control he will kill, but as Clausewitz correctly said, conquerors prefer submission and peace, it is the victim who makes the war. A man with a strong will-to-power wants control, not war as an end in itself.

But a display of will-power by one man calls forth opposition elsewhere. Similarly with superpersonal organisms—they do not and cannot exist alone, since, in their political aspect they are units of *opposition*. Each one exists as a *unit-with-the-power-to-choose-and-fight-enemies*. The ability to create a friend-enemy disjunction is the *essence* of the political.

But this ability necessitates opponents of similar rank. Hence it is quite total political stupidity to speak of a world with only one State, one Parliament, one government or however they

put it. One could forgive Tennyson, but one can only say that if a politician talks about a world with "one State," "one Parliament," or "one government," he is the perfect type of the intellectual ass, and should be anywhere except in a position to distort the destiny of a State and bring misery to the individuals in it. He is an ass, even though he knows better, for—and this will sound self-evident to readers of 1980 and after—there is absolutely no necessity for a politician to deal in lies exclusively, as the Liberal school, the class-warriors, and the distorters believe. Men who are fighting against the Future perhaps have good reason to practice deception constantly, to throw clouds of theories over their actions, to say peace when they mean war, and war when they mean peace, and to keep elaborate classifications of "secret," "confidential" and the like.

The only secrecy that needs to exist in politics is that created by limitations of understanding on the part of individuals—and absolutely nothing can be done about this type of secrecy. For instance, the facts about the nature of politics and power which have been set down in the previous chapters will remain secret from the intellectuals and rationalists forever, even though they read this.

And similarly with lies: quite obviously the statesman who is the embodiment of the Spirit of the Age has no need of fundamental lies. He cannot fear the truth, since his actions are those of organic necessity, against which no force within the organism can prevail. Equally obviously he who sets out to strangle the Future, like Metternich and the *Furstenbund*, or the Liberals, democrats, party-leaders of whatever nature, culture-distorters, and intellectuals of the period 1900-1975 have daily, pressing need of lies, ever bigger and better lies. They like to call this Macchiavellism, and to accuse others of it. But Macchiavelli was certainly not

a "Macchiavellian," or he would not have written his factual, truthful book. Instead he would have written a book about how good human nature is in general, and how extraordinarily good in particular is the nature of princes. Where Macchiavelli writes of deception he is thinking of deceiving the *enemy*—Liberals and distorters regard deception as the norm of conduct toward the populations whose destiny is in their hands, and over whose lives they hold the power of disposition.

The classic example in this realm is and will always remain the "election" in America in the Fall of 1940. There were two candidates, representing the same interests, and the populace was offered its "choice" between them. The issue which the populace would thereby "decide" was whether or not America would intervene in the Second World War. Both candidates said publicly in *totally unequivocal language* that they would not involve America in the War. Yet both of them were committed to the interests which made them candidates to involve America in the war as soon as possible. Both candidates were of course successful, for in late democratic conditions, the parties become trusts and no longer compete, since competition would injure them both. After the "election," the two successful candidates carried out their real commitment, took America to war, and sent to their deaths the very men whose lives they had vowed to spare from death in the Second World War, which did not affect American interests. One of the candidates explained after the "election" that his non-intervention promise to the populace was mere "campaign oratory."

In such a case, there is no doubt whatever that Macchiavelli would have counseled the rulers of America to have both candidates declare *for* intervention. But party-politicians deal in lies from inner compulsion, for their activity itself is an organic lie.